



Hon. Robert T. Matsui

Member of Congress

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Robert T. Matsui
Serving California's 5th District

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MATSUI OFFERS AMENDMENT TO HELP ELDERLY WOMEN IN HEARING ON SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM PROTECTION ACT

WASHINGTON, DC—Today Congressman Robert T. Matsui (D-CA), Ranking Member of the Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee, joined a bipartisan group of subcommittee members in support of H.R. 4070, the "Social Security Program Protection Act of 2002." The measure is expected to pass. It will then go to full Committee, and then proceed to the House floor for final passage.

"I am proud to support the Social Security Program Protection Act. It is critical that we constantly evaluate Social Security and ensure that those who rely on it most are receiving the benefits they deserve," said Matsui. "This bill aids disabled workers who require assistance with their applications and cracks down on those who may be abusing the system."

The bipartisan legislation protects vulnerable beneficiaries from misuse of their benefits, broadens access to legal representation for disabled claimants who require application assistance, and protects against fraud and abuse of the program. The CBO estimates a 10-year savings of \$511 million.

Matsui offered an amendment to the bill, which improves widow's benefits by raising them to 75% of what the couple had been receiving prior to the husband's death. By raising this limit from the current 50-67%, this provision would aid an estimated 4-5 million elderly survivors. The Matsui amendment also includes language from a bipartisan bill that was originally scheduled for mark-up today, H.R. 4069. These provisions would aid approximately 120,000 disabled and elderly widows, and divorced retirees. The Matsui amendment is fiscally responsible and protects the Social Security trust fund. The cost would be funded by general revenue transfers to Social Security, equal to the amount saved by freezing the top tax rate at its current level. The top rate affects 0.6% of all taxpayers, with incomes averaging \$1 million.

"While I support H.R. 4070, I believe there is much more we can do together to improve the program," said Matsui. "My amendment provides a 'widow's guarantee' that will protect the most vulnerable members of our nation's population. It is the right thing to do and is fiscally responsible. I believe that providing equitable benefits for the neediest in our nation is more important than granting yet another tax cut for the wealthiest. It is simply a question of priorities."

Three out of four elderly non-married women, including widows, rely on Social Security for at least half of their total income. Four in ten depend on Social Security for 90 percent or more.

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